

What is claimed is:

1. A high-speed supercavitating underwater vehicle comprising:

an elongated hull of circular cross section, the hull having a cavitator at a forward end thereof, and means for ventilating gas positioned in said hull to form a cavity around said elongated hull in underwater travel; and

an expandable annular skirt fixed on said hull and having an outer surface generally continuous with an outer surface of said hull, said skirt being expandable to increase a diameter of said skirt from proximate a diameter of said hull to proximate a diameter of the cavity, whereby to substantially reduce the flow of gas past said skirt.

2. The underwater vehicle in accordance with claim 1 wherein said skirt is pleated.

3. The underwater vehicle in accordance with claim 1 wherein said skirt comprises a plurality of discrete cells.

4. The underwater vehicle in accordance with claim 2 wherein said skirt comprises a plurality of discrete radially extending cells.

5. The underwater vehicle in accordance with claim 1 wherein said skirt comprises a radially extendible annular bag.

6. The underwater vehicle in accordance with claim 1 wherein said skirt comprises a plurality of radially extendible annular bags.

7. The underwater vehicle in accordance with claim 6 wherein said bags are inflatable.

8. The underwater vehicle in accordance with claim 7 wherein each of said bags overlays at least one neighboring bag when said bags are in a deflated condition.

9. The underwater vehicle in accordance with claim 1 and further comprising stabilizing fins fixed to said hull and extending beyond the boundary of the cavity.